

LATINO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INSTITUTE SPONSORS
18th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
By Kathleen Piché, L.C.S.W., Public Affairs Director



Several hundred dignitaries, clinicians and clients gathered together to learn and discuss behavior health issues in the Latino community at the 18th Annual Latino Behavioral Health Conference held in Los Angeles at the downtown Sheraton September 26-28, 2012.

The three-day conference featured presentations and comments by a list of experts and persons with lived experience. Local leaders who provided welcome and opening comments included: Ambrose Rodriguez, M.P.A., LBHI CEO/Founder; Alex Kopelowicz, M.D., LBHI President; Marvin Southard, D.S.W., LACMDH Director; Charles Sophy, M.D., DCFS Medical Director; Jonathan Fielding, M.D., M.P.H., Director, LA County Department of Public Health; and Anish Mayhagan, M.D., M.S., M.P.H., Director of System Planning and Data Analysis, LA County Department of Health Services.

Dr. Southard stated that the ultimate goal, when providing services in the collaborative care model featured in the *Healthy Way LA* program, is to make whatever treatment needed available, no matter where the client seeks it. "Wherever the client goes, they should be able to get the care they need. There's no wrong door," he said, suggesting that clients should be able to find whatever service they need to thrive, be it medical, substance abuse or mental health treatment.

Dr. Fielding noted that we must work on strengthening community ties to improve overall health among the 9.8 million people that speak over 200 languages in Los Angeles County. One of the ways we can do this is to take a step back and address root causes. If we really want to increase public health, he said, we should increase the high school graduation rate.

One of the many breakout sessions, *Breaking the Pathway to Prison: Empowering Boys and Men of Color*, facilitated by Paco Retana, L.C.S.W., Community Coalition, and Alberto Retana, B.A., brought five young men together who told their stories of escaping gang life on the streets of L.A. They explained the pressure of gang environments and how role models influenced them to move in a more positive direction, giving them options that worked for them (Paco).

